

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5285

C O F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 2528

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, AR

SUBJECT: JUNTA RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO DATE

REF: STATE 83929, BUENOS AIRES 2035, BUENOS AIRES 2288, BUENOS
AIRES 2061

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THE MARCH 24 COUP, THE JUNTA PUT INTO PRACTICE ITS PLANS TO ARREST THOSE MEMBERS OF THE PERONIST GOVT IT BELIEVED MOST LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN CORRUPTION, MALFEASANCE AND SIMILAR MISDEEDS. IN ADDITION, IN LINE WITH ITS OFT-ANNOUNCED WAR AGAINST SUBVERSION, THE MILITARY MOVED TO ARREST AS MANY KNOWN OR SUSPECTED SUBVERSIVES AS POSSIBLE. THOUGH THIS WAVE OF ARRESTS WAS EXPECTED, IT HAS NATURALLY BEEN THE SOURCE OF MUCH PRIVATE COMMENT IN POLITICAL CIRCLES. THE GOLPE AND THE SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS WERE CARRIED OUT AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF CONTINUING TERRORIST ACTS BY BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT. AT THIS POINT, 3 WEEKS AFTER THE COUP, IT APPEARS THAT ARRESTS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW AND BY AND LARGE HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED BY THE NEW JUNTA. END SUMMARY

1. IN THE 3 WEEKS AFTER THE COUP, THE JUNTA GOVT HAS ARRESTED APPROXIMATELY 1500 PERSONS. THE BULK OF THESE ARE GOVT OFFICIALS, NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL, AND LABOR LEADERS WHO ARE BEING HELD ON CHARGES OF CORRUPTION. IN ADDITION, SOME SUSPECTED SUB-

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VERSIVES HAVE ALSO BEEN ARRESTED. ADDED TO THE 1500 PERONS

ALREADY BEING HELD BY THE PERONIST GOVT UNDER THE STATE-OF-SIEGE PROVISIONS, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL AND QUASI-POLITICAL PRISONERS IS NOW APPROXIMATELY 3000. WHILE THESE ARRESTS HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MUCH CONVERSATION IN POLITICAL CIRCLES, THE GENERAL CONSENSUS IS THAT THE ARRESTS SO FAR, WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT WITHIN LEGAL FRAMEWORK.

2. EVEN TO PERONISTS WHO MAY THEMSELVES YET FACE LEGAL DIFFICULTIES WITH THE JUNTA, FACT THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE NAMES OF THOSE ARRESTED HAVE BEEN RELEASED TO THE PRESS IS TAKEN AS ENCOURAGING SIGN. (EMBASSY WILL SHORTLY BE SENDING WASHINGTON PRESS CLIPS GIVING NAMES OF THOSE ARRESTED TO DATE.)

3. IN RECENT DAYS, EMBOFFS HAVE DISCUSSED ARREST ISSUE WITH WIDE CIRCLE OF CONTACTS AND FINDS THEM IN GENERAL SATISFIED THAT JUNTA ACTING WITH RELATIVE MODERATION IN THIS DELICATE AREA. FOR EXAMPLE, FORMER PERONIST INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA TOLD EMBOFFS THAT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE MOST PERONIST ARRESTED SINCE COUP ARE BEING HELD ON STRAIGHT-FORWARD CORRUPTION CHARGES AND IN MOST CASES HE BELIEVED THE JUNTA WOULD HAVE LITTLE PROBLEM PROVING CHARGES IN COURSE LUISN RUBIO, FORMER PERONIST CONGRESSMAN AND PROMINENT ADVISOR OF MEATWORKERS UNION, TOLD EMBOFFS THAT TO HIS PERENIAL KNOWLEDGE N S XEAJORKER#OFFICIALS IN BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE AND SANTA FE PROVINCE, WHERE RUBIO HAS HIS BASE, HAVE BEEN TREATED IN A FAIR MANNER. ONLY TWO SECOND LEVEL OFFICIALS OF THE UNION ARE BEING HELD ON CORRUPTION CHARGES. RUBIO OPINED THAT BOTH HAD HAD THEIR HANDS IN TILL. OSELLA MUNOZ, A LEADING PERONIST CONGRESSMAN OF THE ANTI-VERTICALISTA TENDENCY, AGREED WITH ANALYSIS OF HIS TWO PERONIST COLLEAGUES, ADDING THAT IN HIS VIEW SOME OF THE LABOR LEADERS BEING HELD "WITH LITTLE DOUBT DESERVED IT.

4. ENRIQUEHVMOLI, POLITICAL SECRETARY OF THE UCR PARTY,⁹ INDRCATZR THAT RWEICALS WERE HAVING NO PROBLEM WITH THE MILITARY IN AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS. BOTH HE AND PARTY LEADER RICARDO BALBIN BELIEVE THAT MOST OF THE RIGHT-WING ASSASSINATIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE COUP (IN THE STYLE OF THE TIPLE -A) HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY OFF-DUTY POLICEMEN WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OR AUTHORIZATION OF SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS. HERIBERTO CONFIDENTIAL

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KAHN, COLUMNIST FOR LA OPINION AND MAN CLOSE TO THE CINCS, AGREED WITH VANOLI'S VIEW AND ADDED THAT VIDELA, VIOLA, MASSERRA ET AL WERE DISTURBED BY THESE INCIDENTS AND REALIZED THEY MUST STOP RIGHT-WING TERRORISM AS WELL AS THAT FROM THE LEFT.

5. SENATOR EDUARDO PAZ, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE ARMED PROCES COMMITTEE, AND A MAN WHO DESPITE COUP MAINTAINS GOOD CONTACTS WITH MILITARY, TOLD EMBOFF THAT CLEARLY SOME ARBITRARY

BEHAVIOR JON PART OF AUTHORITIES HAD OCCURRED. HE CITED THREE CASES IN HIS HOME PROVINCE OF TUCUMAN WHERE THE PROVINCIAL ECON MIN AND TWO MEN ON THE GOVERNOR'S PRIVATE STAFF HAD BEEN SEVERELY BEATEN BY ARMY TROOPS SHORTLY AFTER THE COUP. ONE MAN DIED AS RESULT OF BEATING AND OTHER TWO ARE IN SERIOUS CONDITION. PAZ, UPON LEARNING OF THESE INCIDENTS, WENT DIRECTLY TO GENERAL HARGUINDEGUY, INTERIOR MINISTER, TO GREGISTER A PROTEST. HE TOLD HARGUINDEGUY THAT HE KNEW THE BACKGROUND OF THE THREE MEN INVOLVED AND BELIEVED THEY DESERVED LEGAL PENALTIES. THE MOST SEVERE MEASURES THE ARMY WISHES TO APPLY WITHIN THE LAW WILL MEET WITH PUBLIC SUPPORT, HE ADDED, BUT MEASURES OUTSIDE THE LAW WILL RESULT IN PUBLIC SYMPATHY NOT ONLY FOR CLEARLY CORRUPT FORMER OFFICIALS AGAINST WHOM THEY ARE APPLIED, BUT EVEN FOR TERRORISTS. ACCORDING TO PAZ, HARGUINDEGUY AGREED AND IMMEDIATELY CALLED IN AIDES TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER, TELLING PAZ THAT THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND, TRY AS IT WOULD, COULD NOT CONTROL EVERY OFFICER AND THUS PREVENT THIS KIND OF

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INCIDENT. HOWEVER, THEY HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS TYPE OF ARBITRARY JUSTICE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED, APPROVED OR CONDONED BY THE JUNTA, AND WOULD BE STOPPED WHEREVER IT CAME TO LIGHT.

6. OUR POLITICAL SOURCES, PLUS U.S. NEWSMEN HERE (WHO ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE) CONTINUE TO EXPRESS SURPRISE THAT JUNTA HAS ACTED WITH AS MUCH MODERATION AS IT

HAS SO FAR, GIVEN THE ATMOSPHERE OF LEFT-RIGHT TERRORISM WHICH THE COUNTRY HAS ENDURED FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS. ITS POLICY IS TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND IT IS TAKING MEASURES TO CURB AND LOCAL COMMANDER WHO MY, IN EXCEEDING HIS INSTRUCTIONS, VIOLATE THEM. EVEN SO, WITH ARRESTS BEING MADE AND AS YET NO COMPOSITE LIST ISSUED OF THOSE DETAINED, HORROR STORIES BASED ON IMAGINATION RATHER THAN FACT, ARE INEVITABLE. MOST COMMON AND INACCURATE STORY MAKING ROUNDS IS THAT FORMER FORMIN VIGNES IS BEING HELD IN MURKIN CELL ABOARD NAVAL VESSEL IN BUENOS AIRES HARBOR. IN FACT, RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE THAT HE, ALONG WITH MANY PROMINENT OFFICIALS, HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER HOUSE DETENTION AND MAJOR INCONVENIENCE HE IS SUFFERING IS NECESSITY TO NOTIFY AUTHORITIES BEFORE GOING OUT OF HIS HOME. ANOTHER STORY MAKING ROUNDS IS THAT RAUL ALFONSIN, LEADER OF LIBERAL WING OF UCR, IS BEING HELD BY AUTHORITIES. STORY IS SIMILARLY INACCURATE. INDEED, ALFONSIN CALLED POL COUNS YESTERDAY REGARDING VISA CASE AND WAS MOST AMUSED WHEN TOLD HE ALLEGEDLY UNDER ARREST.

7. COMMENT: TO DATE THOSE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WHICH HAVE
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OCCURRED HAVE REPRESENTED EXCEPTIONS WHICH HAVE RESULTED FROM EXCESSES ON PART OF INDIVIDUAL MILITARY OFFICERS AND POLICE OFFICIALS. THEY DO NOT REPRESENT JUNTA POLICY. FROM PERSONAL CONTACT AND FROM STORIES RELAYED BY OUR POLITICAL SOURCES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT JUNTA WANTS VERY MUCH TO AVOID A HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM. IN THIS REGARD, (APR 13) LA OPINION PREDICTS THAT IN "NEXT FEW DAYS" MILITARY WILL EITHER PUBLICLY CHARGE THOSE THEY FEEL ARE GUILTY OF SPECIFIC CRIMES OR RELEASE THEM. LAB ATT GIVES SIMILAR ACCOUNT FROM LABOR SOURCE WHO EXPECTED THIS PROCESS TO BEGIN AFTER EASTER HOLIDAY. INDEED, WE UNDERSTAND FROM GOOD SOURCES THAT VIDELA CALLED IN SENIOR GENERALS LATE LAST WEEK TO DEMAND THAT COMPOSITE LIST OF ALL THOSE DETAINED, WITH CHARGES AGAINST THEM, BE ISSUED ASAP. HE ALSO ASKED FOR DETAILS OF THE RECENT RIGHT-WING KILLINGS, NOTING THAT HE WANTED THIS ACTIVITY STOPPED. HIS SUBORDINATES CLAIMED THEY STILL NOT KNOW THE PERPETRATORS OF THE TERRORIST ACTS BUT REPORTEDLY LEFT MEETING WITH UNDERSTANDING THEY WERE TO ACT QUICKLY TO SEE IT ENDED.
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